(f) Circulation of new editions, display of jacket covers of new books, exhibition of books constitute the main thrust in propagating book reading habit among the employees in the Ministry of Defence.

New Battalions of Rashtriya Fifles

508. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a plan to raise 30 new battalions of the Rashtriya Rifles with over 25,000 troops;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the anticipated expenditure, recurring and non-recurring, on the new establishment; and

(d) whether this avoidable expenditure cannot be diverted for development projects in the country where starvation and death are on increase?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (d) Government have approved, in principle, a proposal to raise thirty new battalions of Rashtriya Rifles over a period of five years, six battalions per year commencing from 2001-2002 to 2004-2005, subject to an annual review each year prior to the actual raisings. These new battalions are being raised for relieving the regular army units which have been deployed for counter insurgency duties along side the para military forces in the J&K State. The anticipated expenditure for these planned raisings is Rs. 575 crore initialy and Rs. 545 crore for annual maintenance. This expenditure is not avoidable in the context of the security imperatives that face the nation. However, this expenditure is not at the cost of development projects which are funded in their own right and priority.

Time Frame for Trial Test of Kaveri Engine

509. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any item frame has been fixed for trial testing of Kaveri engine which powers the LCA;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) to what extent the engine is indigenous and what are the foreign components that are still used in the Kaveri engine?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Trial testing of Kaveri engine upto Preliminary Flight Rating Tests (PFRT) is likely to be completed by December 2003 after which the engine would be integrated with LCA.

(c) The design of the Kaveri engine is indigenous. In the prototype manufacture, certain components/sub systems like Turbine Blade Castings and Heavy Forgings procured from abroad are used. Most of the special materials/ components for Kaveri engine have been developed indigenously and type certified. Plans have also been evolved to develop indigenous alternatives to imported components.

Crisis in manufacturing of missiles and aircrafts

†510. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the manufacturing of missiles and aircrafts is facing crisis due to the closure of Korba Plant after the privatisation of BALCO; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the arrangements made by Government to continue manufacturing and defence research smoothly?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Upgradation of Mig-21-93

511. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether indigenously upgraded MIG-21-93 aircraft has since rolled out at Nasik unit of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.;

(b) if so, the special and innovative features of this aircraft; and

(c) if not, the reasons for delay?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.